

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 530
By Harmon

A RESOLUTION requesting the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) through 2016.

WHEREAS, over 6.5 billion dollars have been paid into the reclamation fund created by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA), but only 5.0 billion dollars have been appropriated collectively for both the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program and the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP), which has received less than one half (1/2) of the funds collected for such program; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has 38 million dollars of unfunded reclamation work remaining, and has completed the reclamation of less than one half (1/2) of the abandoned mine land scarred by past mining; and

WHEREAS, a majority of the abandoned mine land in Tennessee remains on private properties, but negatively impacts local communities and their ability to improve the quality of life and to spur economic growth in their respective areas; and

WHEREAS, RAMP was designed to be landowner driven and directed through local Conservation Districts, enabling individual landowners and small communities to obtain the needed technical and financial resources to repair their land to a productive use; and

WHEREAS, less than fifty percent (50%) of these abandoned mine lands have been reclaimed, and less than seventy percent (70%) of all reclamation funds have been appropriated; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that this General Assembly requests the Congress of the United States to reauthorize Public Law 95-87, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, and extend such Act through the year of 2016.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that it is the sense of this General Assembly that the funds collected for the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) should be redirected from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Surface Mining as a separate line item in the budget appropriation process. Such funds should be budgeted directly to primacy state programs and non-primacy state programs, such as the State of Tennessee. The use of funds identified as RAMP funds should be coordinated with the appropriate Natural Resources Conservation District in each respective state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this General Assembly urges and encourages the U.S. Congress to retain Section 406, Reclamation of Rural Land, in the SMCRA reauthorization process, which Section authorizes the Natural Resources Conservation Service to enter into agreements with individual landowners to reclaim their land.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this General Assembly urges and encourages the U.S. Congress to appropriate all reclamation funds, including those funds annually collected and those unappropriated, for the purposes outlined in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to each member of the U.S. Congress and to each Governor representing a state with abandoned coal mine land, urging their support on behalf of this resolution.